in: Witcher190, Gemmerians, Mages, and 3 more

Herna of Gemmeria

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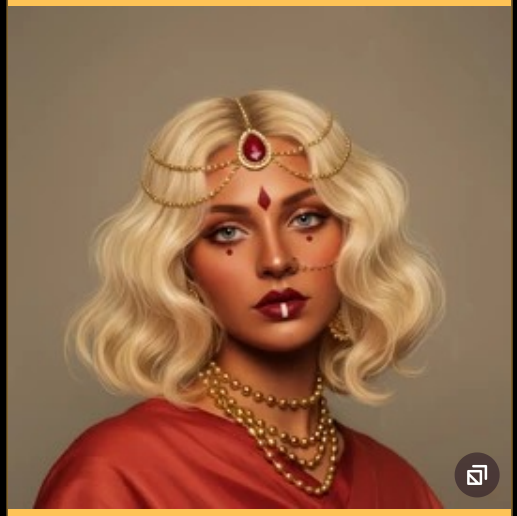
Herna Norpaya (*La Pointe, Gemmeria; September 19, 1248 – The Scarlet Sorceress' Pit, formerly the Davor´s Abyss, Mahakam; September 1350*) —better known as **Herna of Gemmeria**, **Herna**, or **Herna "the Viper"** (a nickname earned both for her reputation as a seductress and manipulator, as well as for her mastery of polymorphism, which allowed her to transform into said animal)— was a Gemmerian sorceress of Melukkan descent on her father's side.

She went down in history as the Great Khanum of Kilan-Tal, as well magical advisor and right hand of the also mage Zeus Burkhan Khaldun, the Great Khan that co-rule it with her in the 1300s. Her influence was key in the Kilanti Empire's invasion of the Northern Kingdoms in the year 1350, making her one of the most decisive figures in the conflict. Her death, alongside Zeus's, during the final battle of the invasion—held in the ancestral homeland of many of the dwarves in the North—marked not only the end of the offensive, but also the beginning of the empire's decline, as the Kilanti troops were forced to retreat back to the Far East, leaderless and defeated.

Herna of Gemmeria



Biographical Information

Born	September 19, 1248
Birthplace	La Pointe, Gemmeria
Status	Dead (killed in The Battle of Mahakam during the Haaki Invasion by the School of the Bear Witcher Cervin) [Deified]
Died	September of 1350
Deathplace	The Pit of the Scarlet Sorceress (formerly known as Davor´s Abyss),

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Biography

Early life (1248 - 1258 A.R)

Herna was born on September 19, 1248, in the coastal town of La Pointe, Gemmeria — the first child of Melukkan spice merchant Tshonga Lamjor Drokden Norpaya and a Nordling-descended local fisherman's daughter, known

	Mahakam, Northern Kingdoms
Service	1268 - 1350
Physical Description	
Race	Human
Gender	Female
Hair	Blonde
Eyes	Blue
Skin	Sun-kissed complexion with an amber-orange undertone
Danger Class	Very High
Political Information	
Profession	Mage Mage-Queen of Telmun (1276-1290) Great Khanum of Kilan-Tal (1310-1350)
Rank	Great Khanum
Titles	Great Khanum of Kilan-Tal The Destroyer (in the Northern Kingdoms) Terrestrial incarnation of the goddess Lilit (by some women in Kilan-Tal) Ömnöd Salkhi (by men in Kilan-Tal)
Affiliation	Imperial Magic Academy Nilfgaardian Empire Haaki Empire
Alias(es)	Mohiri Kari (1290-1300)
Nationality	Gemmerian (Melukkan ancestry on her father´ side)
Coat of Arms	
Relationships	
Father	Tshongpa Lamjor Drokden Norpaya

as Nenlina Supervièlanne.

Mother	Nenlina Supervièlanne
Sibling(s)	Lernynna Norpaya
Lover(s)	Cadfan of Ebbing (boyfriend, briefly) (1268-1269) Cervin (fling?, briefly/boyfriend) (1269-1275) According to Skelliger gossip, various Skelliger warriors (flings, briefly) (1273-1274) Putnam Pitch (fling, briefly) (1276) Zeus Burkhan Khaldun (husband) (1310-1350)

According to Herna herself, it had been love at first sight, at least on her father's part. Using the wealth he had accumulated from spice trading, Tshonga purchased Nenlina's hand in marriage from her father, establishing himself in La Pointe as a figure of some importance, serving as an intermediary between other Melukkan spice merchants that passed through the coast of Gemmeria and the locals. Her mother, at first, did not love him, but in time — as was common in many relationships in Gemmeria — she "*grew accustomed*" to his presence. By March 1248, that tolerance had turned into something resembling affection, and Herna was born nine months later.

Her early years were relatively difficult. For a number of reasons — among them, as she would later say, her lack of "*physical grace,*" her half-foreign heritage, and Gemmeria's mentality of the *law of the strong* — she suffered bullying at the hands of the other local children. On top of this, her parents' marriage, built on a transactional foundation, slowly began to fall apart. Home life worsened as the years passed, aggravated by the province's lack of divorce laws.

Her father threw himself into work, earning Herna's admiration through his charisma and fueling in her a growing fascination with his homeland, Melukka. In doing so, however, he neglected both his wife and his daughters (the second of whom had been conceived in a vain attempt to mend the marriage).

These circumstances — along with the bullying — planted in young Herna the seeds of moral pragmatism, an intense need to be beyond anyone else, a craving for attention, and an ever-deepening obsession with power. All of these traits, at their core, stemmed from the basic emotional needs she had never had fulfilled as a child. They transformed a ugly but kind-hearted girl into the first stage of the monster she would later become.

Her breaking point came in 1258, at the age of ten, when a group of boys decided to "*play with her the Gemmerian way*." The event triggered a conduit moment — she killed them by setting them ablaze through spontaneous combustion, thus discovering her magical talent.

Her discovery of her magical capabilities, however, came at a terrible cost. In true Gemmerian fashion, the locals, after the incident, sought justice through the "*eye for an eye*" method and nearly burned her alive, were it not for her father's intervention. Whom, with the help of the Mage Hunters investigated the incident and discovered that the girl had indeed used magic accidentaly, thus sparing her from a certain death once this was

revealed to the angry people of La Pointe. After that, the Mage Hunters registered her in their records, and advised her father to send her abroad to study so she call hone her talent, both to honor the empire and to prevent further attempts at retribution.

Thus, motivated partly by paternal instinct, partly by a desire to rid himself of the burden of raising her, and partly by ambition to see her become a renowned sorceress who would bring honor to the family name, Tshonga paid her initial feed to the Imperial Magic Academy and sent her away to study — never realizing that his decision would give the Old Continent one of the most dangerous women it would ever know.

Time at the Imperial Magic Academy (1258–1268 A.R)

Though her years at the Academy were far better than her childhood, its highly competitive environment only nourished and strengthened the mental seeds planted in her infancy. And thus, a personality that had once been capable of redirection gradually deteriorated—by the mid-1260s evolving into full narcissistic personality disorder with histrionic and antisocial traits. Among these stood out her firm conviction that mages were destined to rule the world.

As for her actual time at the Academy, nothing especially remarkable is recorded—aside from the fact that, for a brief period, she once again became the target of bullying due to her mixed heritage, until, according to rumor, she "*made disappear*" those who mocked her. However, this was never investigated by the rectorate, as the institution prided itself on keeping "*only the best of the best*." Nothing can therefore be stated with certainty.

During these years, she underwent magical surgery (despite such procedure not being something promoted by the Empire) to make herself extraordinarily attractive. She specialized in the notoriously complicated fire magic, which earned her a reputation as one of the most exceptional students of her generation. She also taught herself disciplines such as polymorphy and blood magic, developed a so-called "*friendship*" (in truth, a parasitic relationship on her part) with the later legendary Brianna Vassermiller, and later became romantically involved—after her graduation—with one of the professors of the academy (who never taught Herna during her period in the academy), the mage Cadfan of Ebbing. It was he who introduced her to even darker and more dangerous arts, such as chasm magic, until his practices were discovered and he was expelled, hunted in the south by the Mage Hunters and in the north by the Praetorship.

Relationship with Cadfan of Ebbing (1268 A.R)

Ironically, Cadfan would not die at the hands of either of those organizations, but of Herna herself. At some point in 1268, she offered him refuge, and after a few months ultimately murdered him mid-copulation, claiming for herself all the knowledge Cadfan had amassed concerning Chasm Magic.

First Attempt at Seizing Power (1269 A.R)

By 1269, Herna decided to put her belief—that mages were meant to rule the world—into practice. After searching across the western coast, she chose the Nilfgaardian vassal duchy of Toussaint as her target.

She knew, however, that taking it by force was impossible; the Empire would immediately crush her. Thus, she devised a plan—simple, yet potentially effective.

Her idea was to present herself in the duchy as an *"exotic sorceress"*, charming the "*dim-witted*" local nobles with a display of magic. From there, she intended to become the personal advisor of Duchess Anna Henrietta, then subtly stage a coup by faking the duchess's death through a supposed illness, seizing control of the duchy for herself. Once established, she planned to ascend further within the Empire—perhaps even reaching the imperial throne itself.

However, those plans went no further than the performance. Among the audience that day was a witcher of the School of the Bear, Cervin, with whom Herna—true to her narcissistic nature—became infatuated. This began a toxic, intermittent, and deeply complicated relationship that would last until 1275.

Though the witcher would, regrettably, become her second notable victim (the first being Cadfan), and suffer greatly for it, he also—unknowingly—thwarted Herna's attempts at seizing power not once, but two times. The first of these was in Toussaint, where his excessive insistence on what he naively believed to be a normal relationship drove the sorceress to flee back to her native Gemmeria, where she would attempt her second bid for power.

Second attempt in Gemmeria (1271 A.R)

Little is truly known about the events that took place in Gemmeria involving Herna, for the existing accounts contradict one another. What is certain, however, is that between the late 1269 and 1271, she somehow managed to position herself close to power — even if only as an advisor to the puppet king of her homeland.

Setting aside the conflicting elements among these accounts, it is generally believed that her goal was to rise first to the position of advisor to the imperial governor of the province, then to become governor herself, and from there — as in her earlier plans for Toussaint — to eventually reach the imperial throne. Supposedly, she intended to achieve this through the use of a phylactery with a curse inside with which she planned to curse the puppet king, have him replaced and assassinated in the process, rule the province with excellence in the eyes of the Empire, and then rise step by step through the same pattern until she reached the imperial court. Once there, she would change her approach and finally claim the throne for herself.

Reconstructing the events from the few consistent details across the various stories, it appears this plan was unknowingly foiled precisely at the stage when she intended to curse

the king and have him killed — once again, by her lover Cervin, who had arrived in Gemmerian lands and, instead of slaying anyone, lifted the curse casted upong the king. Yet, without realizing it, Herna then spread rumors behind his back, claiming that it had been Cervin who owned the phylactery and thus had been indirectly responsible for the curse. As a result, most versions of the courtly incident portray the witcher as the villain, not her.

Because of her infatuation with the witcher and the suspicion this scandal brought upon her, Herna was forced to flee Gemmeria. Seeking a new place to fulfill her belief, she would, two years later — with partial success — set her eyes on Skellige, only for life again, in 1275 to thwart her plans.

Third attempt in Skellige (1275 A.R)

In 1273, Herna arrived in Skellige, settling in the capital, Kaer Trolde on Ard Skellig, under the guise of a temporary foreign healer who offered her services to warriors returning from raids — at prices generous enough to be enticing. The ruse worked: through a mixture of her natural charisma and exotic charm (and, according to local gossip, by seducing men), she quickly won the islanders' trust. By 1274, she had been summoned to the royal court, where the reigning queen, Cerys an Craite — in her ongoing efforts to modernize the islands — offered Herna the position of advisor sorceress at the royal court. Herna accepted without hesitation, much to the druids' dismay, as they strongly opposed such changes, especially the idea of a foreign sorceress advising their ruler. Fortunately, Cerys eventually reached a compromise, appointing a local mage after Herna fled the islands to occupy the role.

At some point in 1274, Cervin arrived in the archipelago, reuniting with her. For a brief while, what resembled a "*normal*" relationship took form between them — though, given Herna's nature, it was doomed to last no more than a year.

This time, however, her plan for seizing power differed. Herna knew that attempting something similar to Toussaint or Gemmeria would not work given the islanders' distinct mentality. So she opted for something even more simpler than before — yet potentially a lot much more effective: a direct coup d'état. She payed and employed Cidarian pirates as proxies, exploiting the longstanding rivalry between Cidaris and Skellige and the former's historic attempts of the coastal continental kingdom to conquer the archipelago, as well as recruiting members of the outlawed local warrior order known as the vildkaarls. To these exiles, Herna promised lavish rewards should she become queen — namely, being instated as new jarls of the isles replacing the clans of old with new ones founded by them.

Unfortunately for Herna, the coup failed due to a combination of factors: the Skelligers' sheer resilience and the disorganization of the two factions she relied upon at the time of the coup, both being far too "wild" to coordinate effectively.

After the failure, Herna once again placed the blame on Cervin, who was arrested and sold into slavery to passing Nilfgaardian traders. Taking advantage of the distraction and chaos

surrounding her scapegoat's punishment, she fled — this time to her father's homeland, Melukka. Her escape came just in time, for soon after Cervin's departure toward imperial lands, the interrogation of captured pirates and vildkaarls revealed Herna's direct involvement in the failed coup.

The Destroyer of Old Telmun (1275-1276 A.R)

After escaping, Herna arrived in Melukkan territory around the middle of 1275 — more specifically, in one of its coastal kingdoms, Talamahādvīpa, known in Ofieri sources (and therefore in the more distant lands such as the Northern Kingdoms) as Telmun. She remained in this kingdom rather than traveling to her father's homeland, the city-state of Chalotra, because the political situation of the local crown was far more advantageous to her. Once she learned of it, Herna — with her by-then characteristic tenacity — once again began plotting to seize a territory. This time, however, she would succeed, having learned enough from her failures along the western coast.

Her plan now was even simpler than the previous ones. Herna had arrived in the region with a group of merchants from neighboring countries who sought greater influence in Telmun and who had explained to her the kingdom's "*complicated*" economic situation (in practice, that Queen Roxana had implemented a centralized economy in an attempt to reduce caste inequality after having a battlefield epiphany and abandoning her former epithet, Roxana the Bloody). Knowing Herna was a sorceress, and hoping she might help overturn the queen's reforms, these merchants provided her with the perfect wedge. Herna took advantage of the need for economic liberalization in the coastal kingdom and promised the merchants that, if she gained access to power, she would dismantle Roxana's system and return everything to its "*natural course.*" With that assurance, she crafted her plan.

Little by little — through a mixture of the influence of her new contacts, her natural charisma, and the addition of ambitious nobles hungry for greater power — she began gaining ground against the queen, until the moment arrived when Roxana would not face a coup *per se*, but a seemingly "*natural*" uprising. To this, Herna added her own forces — monstrous creations crafted using the Chasm Magic knowledge she had taken from Cadfan.

The Queen of New Telmun (1276 - 1290 A.R)

All of this took barely more than a year, and by August 1276, Herna had nearly everything prepared for the "*natural*" rebellion to erupt. However, events were delayed by at least a month. Roxana was a capable political player, and she even managed to persuade a foreigner — witcher Putnam Pitch, who was visiting Melukka at the time — to act as her spy.

Unfortunately for Roxana, this backfired. Herna seduced Putnam, slept with him, and gradually turned him — whether he realized it or simply refused to acknowledge it until far too late — into what was essentially a double agent.

Thus Putnam only managed to delay the inevitable, and by early September, the siege of the capital, Ashtara, took place. This brought about the fall of Roxana's monarchy and Herna's rise to the throne as its first mage-queen. It took her little time to take control of the rest of the country.

However, her reign was plagued with instability, as expected given Herna's nature — particularly because she did not fulfill her promises but instead made matters worse. She transformed Telmun into an absolutist monarchy. This caused the merchants and ambitious nobles who had allied themselves with her to eventually turn against her. By 1290, they launched a coup d'état, establishing a triumvirate of mage-kings and forcing Herna to flee the country, heading even farther east.

Time at Bia Thin (1290 -1300 A.R)

The fall of Telmun's throne brought no real change for Herna. Not because she did not wish it, but because she could not—given the structural problem that was her very nature and the lack of anyone truly capable of confronting her, for no one knew her deeply enough except herself.

However, like the viper she was (a nickname she would later earn for using her polymorphy to transform into an actual viper), she survived—adapting, like said animal, with great ease to her new situation. She set her sights on Bia Thin not to seize power (for she had already experienced it during fourteen long years), but to seek refuge, and perhaps later take power only after studying whatever land she reached in depth, in order to keep it forever.

To reach the region, given that her head now carried a bounty after Telmun's new government rose to power and alerted neighboring countries of her disappearance, Herna—using a mixture of lesser illusory magic, acting, and a false name, Mohini Kari—joined a merchant caravan from the Melukkan empire of Khodû headed toward the mostly non-human kingdom of Midaung in southern Bia Thin, also known as Ketu Rahu. She believed that studying a social mindset essentially alien to her own would help her achieve her goal.

Thus, after traveling for months with the caravan, she reached the territory—but failed to fulfill her objective. At the border, the caravan was attacked by monsters, which slaughtered everyone. Herna did nothing to defend them, thinking instead to take advantage of their goods. This resulted in the border patrols, upon arriving, believing Herna had murdered the caravan members, and thus they imprisoned her for 30 years—three years for each merchant supposedly killed on lands bordering Midaung territory. Not being able to escape, due to the prison cells of the prison where she ended using alloys that contained dimeritium, the anti-magical metal.

Fortunately for Herna, she served only ten, thanks to a combination of her growing tired of maintaining her disguise (which led the authorities to "*release*" an "*unknown*" stranger) and the tense political situation between Ilan Qurun and the previous region, by then unified as a country of Kilan-Tal (erroneously known as Haakland by Nordlings).

Ascension in Haakland (1300 -1310 A.R)

After ten years in prison, Herna was released. Not because she had been a well-behaved inmate whose sentence had been reduced — far from it. During those ten years she had attempted to organize uprisings on three separate occasions, as the prison bars cells were made of dimeritium, as mentioned before, and therefore magic was limited or, in many cases, entirely null. Rather, she was freed due to a legal loophole that exempted individuals with dissociative identity disorder from imprisonment, on the grounds that each aspect of such a person was not part of a single system but separate selves. Herna exploited this loophole by deceiving the locals into believing that her alias fell under this condition.

This resulted in her being released — though not in the usual manner. Given the political climate of the time, the circumstances were far from ordinary. To avoid the wrath of a unified Kilan-Tal, whose power was growing steadily, the local authorities decided to send various offerings to the Great Khan in hopes of appeasing him. Among these offerings were several women. Unfortunately, almost all were human and suffering from mental illness — chosen both for their perceived submissiveness, for their race, and as a convenient way for families and the state to rid themselves of a "*burden*." And so Herna, due to her supposed disorder (not to be confused with the one she truly possessed), was sent northward with them, toward the distant steppes. None of those involved had any idea of the consequences this decision would have.

Once she reached the steppes and entered the Great Khan's harem, most of the women died, unable to endure the lifestyle of Kilan-Tal. Of those who survived, Herna rose quickly among the favorites thanks to her charisma, intelligence, and adaptability (aided by the fact that she did not suffer from any severely limiting mental affliction). This led, in time, to favoritism; favoritism to a place in the Khan's inner circles; closeness to affection (at least on the Khan's part); the Khan's affection to marriage; marriage to manipulation; manipulation to real power — and real power, sooner rather than later, to absolute power.

Thus, in a mere ten years, what had begun as just another woman in the harem meant to bear the Great Khan children, became the Great Khanum of Kilan-Tal — and forty years later, the co-ruler (but true ruler in the shadows) of the greatest empire the Old Continent would ever witness. One that would make even the mighty Nilfgaardian Empire seem small by comparison.

The Rise of an Empire (1310 - 1350 A.R)

Although Great Khan Zeus Burkhan Khaldun was the visible head of the newly proclaimed Kilanti Empire (or Haaki Empire, as Nordlings would later call it), the true mastermind behind it was Herna. For while the mage-turned-Khan was not a poor ruler overall, military matters — despite his mixed education — were clearly not his strong suit. Herna, on the other hand, possessed extensive experience thanks to her many previous attempts at seizing power. Combined with her already-mentioned adaptability, this allowed her to learn quickly and avoid repeating past mistakes.

Thus, manipulated by his wife and under her secret military leadership, Zeus and the Kilantis launched themselves in frenzy-like hordes into an unbroken campaign of conquest after conquest, spanning four entire decades. In that time, they subjugated a vast portion of the Old Continent, creating an empire that stretched from the mountainous regions of the Far North to the coasts of Bia Thin. Only a handful of territories escaped their advance — either due to natural barriers such as the Korath Desert and the ocean (Melukka, Barsa, Ofir, and lands further south), or thanks to superior technology (Zerrikania). Consequently, for these reasons and others, by 1350 the empire set its sights on the western coast — and thus, on the Northern Kingdoms.

In doing so, they fulfilled the prophecy that Ithlinne had once spoken in the distant past, beginning their invasion from the Nilfgaardian vassal state of Ebbing in September 1349 (the southernmost territory considered Nordling at the time, and therefore included in Ithlinne's original vision), and reaching the modern borders of the Northern Kingdoms in 1350.

Death (September of 1350 A.R)

Thus, after a year in which the Haakis arrived like a storm and burned, slaughtered, and feasted on the ruins, drinking from the skulls of their fallen enemies, exactly as Ithlinne had once foretold, the Haakis and their two great hordes—the Black Horde and the Red Horde (along with the sub-horde of their leaders, the Golden Horde)—were finally halted at the Battle of Mahakam. There, a united Northern Kingdoms front, appropriately known as the Northern Front, stopped them by luring them into a trap within dwarven territory, through one of its many narrow passes. This prevented open-field combat, the enemy's greatest advantage due to their steppe origins and exceptional horsemanship. The terrain allowed the defensor forces to divide the hordes (and the sub-horde as well) into smaller groups, which were far easier to defeat thanks to both their reduced numbers and the mountainous landscape that prevented quick regrouping.

It was there that Herna met her end, when the past came knocking in the form of the witcher Cervin. After a brief confrontation—during which Herna used her polymorphic abilities—Cervin managed to force her out of her transformed state and corner her. According to later chronicles, Herna attempted to manipulate her former lover in order to escape, only for the witcher, this time unmoved, to kick her into one of the many open-pit mines of the region, more specifically, the later known Pit of the Scarlet Sorceress, back then known as the Davor´s Abyss, ending her life.

This, combined with the trap and the loss of both Zeus and Herna, caused the Haakis to break ranks and flee back to their steppes. Their retreat led to internal conflicts that, soon after, plunged the empire into rapid decline, ending with its complete disappearance from the face of the earth — partly due to former states regaining sovereignty, and partly due to new powers emerging in the steppes as a result of the aforementioned internal struggles.

Legacy

After her death, Herna achieved what she had always desired — in a way — attention, and power, even if only symbolic.

On the western coast, she would be remembered mostly negatively, yet remembered all the same: as *The Destroyer*, the one who brought such ruin and death upon the Northern Kingdoms.

In her native Gemmeria, by contrast, her memory became mixed. To some, she was a source of patriotic pride — someone who had managed to tame the fearsome eastern foreigners, a testament to Gemmerian strength and might. To others (notably those more aligned with the Empire ever since the country transformation into a province), she was little more than a powerful storm — one that had not only nearly destroyed the North, but, had she not been stopped in time by them, could very well have brought down the seemingly eternal Nilfgaardian Empire.

In the south, the view of her was negative as well. In Melukka, she came to be seen as a foreigner who had seized control of one of their states and nearly ruined it with her policies — a walking cautionary tale: do not trust a pretty face nor fair promises, but rather the actions a person takes and the consequences that follow.

But in the East — in the East it was different. In Kilan-Tal, where the cult of Lilit (also known as Niya) held some power due to being a popular religion between various groups, many women came to see Herna as the goddess herself — a symbol of feminine power and the ability to reshape the world when one so wills it (even if, in this case, was for destruction and doom), despite the barriers imposed by men.

Even among Kilanti men, she was somewhat respected. Many warriors saw her as The Southern Wind (*Ömnöd Salkhî*) that guided them — and had that wind continued to blow, it would have granted them total victory. That is, a victory that would have carved a mark on the world even deeper than the one the Kilantis ultimately left.

In addition to all this, it is said that Herna left behind a legacy in the form of a book of all her magical knowledge on Chasm Magic and polymorphy — a work that passed from hand to hand until its whereabouts were lost. It would become one of history's mythical "lost books," spoken of in the same breath as the first edition of the Good Book of Prophet Lebioda. The so-called Agadhasya Darśanam (Common Ancient Melukkan: *The Vision of the Abyss*)

Physical Appearance

Herna was a petite woman, standing at just 1.45 meters in height.

She had blonde hair, striking blue eyes, and a sun-kissed complexion with an amber-orange

undertone. This distinctive hue was the result of her mixed heritage: Gemmerian on her mother's side and Melukkan on her father's. Combined with her frequent use of Melukkan attire, jewelry, and fabrics, her look ensured she stood out wherever she went—except, of course, in her father's homeland, where such features were far more common.

Physically, she was considered highly attractive, a beauty enhanced both by her mixed lineage and by the magical practices common among sorceresses of the Nordling and Nilfgaardian spheres. Like many of her kind, she preserved her youth and allure for decades through a combination of magical surgery after her graduation and alchemical means such as the Mandrake Longevity Potion, which halted the physical signs of aging.

Her hair was typically kept at a medium length—neither short nor long—and her figure struck a balance between athletic grace and the voluptuous curves associated with "fertility" in the masculine unconscious.

Her attire varied according to circumstance. She was most often seen in saris, ranging from formal and elegant to provocatively revealing. In the latter case, she frequently accentuated her appearance with temporary golden tattoos in the style of her father's land, heightening her already magnetic presence. On most occasions, she adorned herself with a blend of Nordling or Nilfgaardian jewels interwoven with Melukkan pieces, the latter often reappearing even in her bolder ensembles.

Her face was always carefully made up: red lips marked with a distinctive white line across the lower lip, Melukkan dots painted in red beneath her eyes, a forehead triangle of the same hue, and subtle golden eyeshadow to complete the effect.

Abilities

Herna was an exceptionally talented mage, whose name was, within magical circles in the North, often compared to that of the legendary Philippa Eilhart, despite lacking the over three centuries of experience the later canonized as a saint sorceress would go on to accumulate.

Although her initial path seemed destined to follow in her father's commercial footsteps, he —after her conduit moment—decided to send her to the prestigious Imperial Magic Academy. There, as mentioned prior, Herna not only excelled but chose to specialize in one of the most demanding branches of the magical arts: fire magic.

According to the most grandiose accounts of her life, she was said to have had two ifrits in her service, entities that accompanied her through much of her magical career. However, the blind loyalty to the Empire and its Emperor, so rigorously instilled in the students of the academy, never took root in Herna. Her ambition was always greater than any imperial ideal.

Even during her time at the academy, her hunger for power led her to explore other

branches of magic, as mentioned earlier, beginning a self-taught path that brought her to the ancient texts of her father's homeland. More specifically, to the writings of the Melukkan sorceress Chamunda Randhawa, with a strong emphasis on those focused on haemokinesis—the art of manipulating blood.

Eventually, as mentioned also before, after graduating from the academy, her pursuit of forbidden knowledge led her to the infamous Cadfan of Ebbing, a mage specialized in the darkest magical arts of the Old Continent. Herna seduced him, became his lover for a time, and ultimately murdered him mid-copulation, claiming for herself all the knowledge Cadfan had amassed regarding the Chasm Magic.

From that moment on, Herna came to be recognized as the most prominent mage in the field of dark magic throughout the Old Continent. Her mastery extended beyond mere technical prowess—she stood apart by rejecting the traditional clichés of necromancers: she was not a hoarder of corpses nor a cloistered figure, but a vivid, carnal, and blazing presence, who wielded her power in pursuit of her own ends. Only one figure rivaled her in this domain: Brianna Vassermiller, whose unique condition placed her, in the opinion of some, one step above.

Personality

Herna embodied, in her appearance, stature, and demeanor, the old sayings: "*don't judge a book by its cover*" and "*the most potent poisons come in small vials*."

Petite in frame but formidable in presence, she defied superficial expectations from the moment she entered a room. Her carefully curated appearance—enhanced through magical means, as was customary among many sorceresses in both Nordling and Nilfgaardian Cultural Spheres—was only the surface layer of a persona meticulously sculpted to captivate, disarm, and dominate.

Her exotic allure, the result of an intentional blending of Melukkan and Gemmerian aesthetics, made her stand out in any gathering. Yet it was her voice, her command of language, that truly bewitched. Herna possessed a rhetorical prowess so refined, so intuitively effective, that even the most zealous preacher might find themselves pausing, listening, and questioning their own convictions. She could speak in whispers or declarations, and both would leave a mark.

Her magnetism ran deeper than mere charm. Even when her habitual condescension toward others became obvious—sometimes veiled in politeness, other times not—it was rarely challenged. People found themselves overlooking her slights, bending to her will, agreeing without realizing why. Not because she wove spells on them—though she could—but because her presence alone carried the gravity of someone who should be obeyed. Manipulation wasn't her primary tool—it was a luxury she rarely needed.

Her ambition, fierce and consuming, made her both strategically patient and explosively impatient, depending on the context. She was a planner, but also a storm waiting for the right opening. Her moral compass was flexible to the point of distortion, governed not by ideals, but by utility. Though she often echoed the phrase "*the end justifies the means*," in practice, the "*end*" was most often herself: her growth, her pleasure, her legacy.

She wasn't devoid of empathy—but rather, she found it inconvenient. Other people's suffering, however real, struck her as melodramatic, inefficient, or simply beneath her notice. She viewed weakness with a mix of amusement and contempt, and while she could mimic concern, it was rarely sincere. Still, her arrogance and pride never quite alienated her completely—because she was a master at redirecting the gaze. With a smile, a gesture, a perfectly-timed word, she could make her flaws disappear like foglets illusions in the mist.

Her obsession with power went beyond politics or personal safety. Herna genuinely believed that mages were destined to rule, and that non-magical rulers were delaying the inevitable. Whispers followed her: some claimed she saw herself as a mortal avatar of divinity, a goddess cloaked in silk and ambition. Whether that was delusion or otherwise was a matter of debate—but few denied the magnetism of her belief in herself.

She thrived on attention, both wanted and unwanted. Provocation was her form of flirtation, her shield and her sword. In conversation, in dress, in battle, she courted gazes like currency. But hidden beneath that performance lay something more fragile.

Her most telling vulnerability was her emotional dependency on certain lovers—those rare few who managed to intrigue her, who played her game well enough to survive it. But her bond with them was never built on love; rather, it was based on ownership, control, and the illusion of intimacy. If she couldn't dominate them, she would withdraw… or destroy. When threatened—especially in situations where her usual weapons, magical or otherwise, were unavailable—she became passive-aggressive, cold, biting, and unpredictable. Her discomfort was never voiced; it bled through sarcasm, distance, and the sharpening of every gaze.

For Herna, domination was holistic: emotional, social, magical, and even sexual. She viewed seduction as a form of warfare, and she wielded her "womanly weapons" not as a crutch, but as part of an arsenal she mastered with surgical precision.

Yet, for all her vices, Herna's virtues were undeniable. Her charisma could sway nations, her intellect could outmaneuver courts, and her adaptability allowed her to infiltrate hostile spaces and bend them to her advantage. Where others fled, she calculated. Where others broke, she evolved.

It was this unique blend of elegance and venom, ambition and control, that allowed Herna not only to survive, but to ascend—to leave her mark on history, feared, admired, and never forgotten.

Image Credits

- *Herna Coat of Arms* by Antosik512

Trivia

- Herna's appearance is very loosely based on that of the French-Algerian-American singer Lolo Zuaï — but any similarity with the artist ends there.
- On a personality level, Herna is partially inspired by the Netflix version of Yennefer — a portrayal that has little to do with her book counterpart. The behavior displayed by that version of Yennefer throughout the seasons resembles far more the personality disorder Herna possesses than the Yennefer seen in the books and even the games. It should be stressed that this is not the actress's fault, but rather the result of the poor scripts she was given.
- Her partial Melukkan heritage, on the other hand, is 100% inspired by the actress who portrayed Yennefer in the Netflix show, Anya Chalotra — whose own ancestry is partly Indian. This influence is clearly reflected in the Herna father's city-state, Chalotra, which serves as a direct homage to the actress.
- Aside from Netflix's Yennefer, Herna's personality is also inspired by Cersei Lannister from the *A Song of Ice and Fire* book series.
- Part of Herna's imperialism is inspired by the imperialism of Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom.
- The mention of sending women with mental illnesses abroad is a critique of how extremely liberal systems treat such individuals as a problem rather than an opportunity to understand societal shortcomings, the human psyche, or simply people who — with help — can integrate into society and contribute greatly, rather than the opposite. A notorious example of this is found in Western democracies, whose systems are structured in such a way that they tend to promote an overabundance of psychopaths in positions of power.

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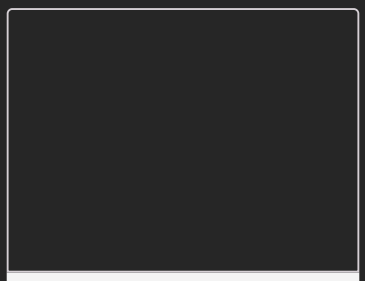

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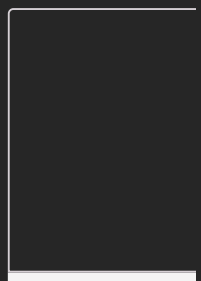

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